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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/887,873	06/22/2001	Eric D. Bergman	0007056-0183/P5731NP/ARG/	8032

26263 7590 02/13/2006

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EXAMINER

BASHORE, WILLIAM L

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

2176

DATE MAILED: 02/13/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/887,873

Applicant(s)

BERGMAN ET AL.

Examiner

William L. Bashore

Art Unit

2176

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 November 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-39 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-39 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Art Unit: 2176

DETAILED ACTION

1 This action is responsive to communications: amendment filed 4/6/2005, to the original application filed **June 22, 2001**.

2. The objection to the specification under 35 USC 132(a) has been withdrawn as necessitated by amendment.

3. Claims 1-39 pending. Claims 1, 8, 12, 14, 21, 25, 27, 34, 38 are independent.

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

4. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 11/21/2005 has been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

5. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Art Unit: 2176

9. **Claims 1-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) based upon a public use or sale of the invention. The invention is Microsoft Excel 2000 (hereinafter Excel 2000), 1999 Microsoft Corporation, screenshots from application pages 1-14 (including newly applied additional screenshots pages 15-19).**

In regard to independent claim 1, Excel 2000 discloses a spreadsheet program as shown on Excel 2000 pages 1 and 2. Cell C1 has been customized to include a typical (editable) formula for holding the result of summing cells A1 and B1 (Excel 2000 pages 2 and 3). Page 3 shows cell C1 (designated as a first cell) activated into edit mode. While in edit mode, a user selects cell B3 (designated as a second cell) in response to a user mouse click.

Subsequent to a user's determination that cell B3 should not be entered into the first cell's formula (i.e. does not conform to a predetermined syntax), the "X" box is depressed, which cancels the action, reverting cell C1's formula back to the current state (Excel 2000 pages 5 and 6). If said user determines that said reference does conform to a predetermined syntax, then the reference is entered into the first cell's formula.

Excel 2000 discloses a user activating cell B3, after the editing process as explained above (Excel 2000 page 7).

Excel 2000 discloses a validation method whereby various restrictions can be applied to cells (i.e. referring to other cells, formulas, etc.), once set, said restrictions can be automatically applied to all relevant cells in a workbook session accordingly (see Excel 2000 pages 16-19; compare with claim 1 "*determining, automatically by a computer whether a reference to second cell conforms...*").

In regard to dependent claim 2, Excel 2000 discloses display of a formula toolbar when a formula is edited (Excel 2000 page 8 – drop down menu, also "X" and "+" buttons, and input block).

In regard to dependent claim 3, Excel 2000 discloses closing display of a formula toolbar when a formula is out of editing mode (Excel 2000 page 10 – drop down menu, also elimination of “X” and “+ “ buttons).

In regard to dependent claims 4, 5, 6, Excel 2000 discloses upon selection of a function (i.e. Insert, Function, select “IF” from top menu), a dialog opens and a mathematical operator “=” is added to an otherwise blank formula (Excel 2000 page 9). Excel 2000 also discloses function toolbar (drop down menu) operator “IF”, “SUM” etc. Excel 2000 page 8).

In regard to dependent claim 7, Excel 2000 teaches if a user wishes, he/she can select the “+ “ button, therefore entering cell reference B3 to the formula in the first cell (Excel 2000 pages 5, 11 respectively). A user can also delete said reference formula accordingly, if necessary.

In regard to independent claim 8, Excel 2000 discloses a spreadsheet program as shown on Excel 2000 pages 1 and 2. Cell C1 has been customized to include a typical (editable) formula for holding the result of summing cells A1 and B1 (Excel 2000 pages 2 and 3).

Excel 2000 discloses a user initially selecting cells C1 and C2 (as a cell group) (Excel 2000 pages 12, 13). Although two cells are initially selected, each cell can then be individually selected for editing via toggling using “ENTER” key, in this case cell C2.

Excel 2000 page 12 shows cell C2 activated into edit mode, with the knowledge that cell C1 (also selected) contains an existing formula, as explained above.

In addition, Excel 2000 discloses a spreadsheet program as shown on Excel 2000 pages 1 and 2. Cell C1 has been customized to include a typical (editable) formula for holding the result of summing cells A1 and B1 (Excel 2000 pages 2 and 3). Page 3 shows cell C1 (designated as a first cell) activated into edit mode. While in edit mode, a user selects cell B3 (designated as a second cell) in response to a user mouse click.

Subsequent to a user's determination that cell B3 should not be entered into the first cell's formula (i.e. does not conform to a predetermined syntax), the "X" box is depressed, which cancels the action, reverting cell C1's formula back to the current state (Excel 2000 pages 5 and 6). If said user determines that said reference does conform to a predetermined syntax, then the reference is entered into the first cell's formula.

Excel 2000 discloses a user activating cell B3, after the editing process as explained above (Excel 2000 page 7).

Excel 2000 discloses a validation method whereby various restrictions can be applied to cells (i.e. referring to other cells, formulas, etc.), once set, said restrictions can be automatically applied to all relevant cells in a workbook session accordingly (see Excel 2000 pages 16-19; compare with claim 8 "*determining, automatically by a computer whether a reference to second cell conforms...*").

In regard to dependent claim 9, Excel 2000 discloses display of a formula toolbar when a formula is edited (Excel 2000 page 8 – drop down menu, also "X" and "+" buttons, and input block).

In regard to dependent claim 10, Excel 2000 discloses that double clicking in a cell (or in the input bar) initiates formula editing.

In regard to dependent claim 11, Excel 2000 discloses display of a formula toolbar when a formula is edited (Excel 2000 page 8 – drop down menu, also "X" and "+" buttons, and input block).

In regard to independent claim 12, Excel 2000 discloses a spreadsheet program as shown on Excel 2000 pages 1 and 2. Cell C1 has been customized to include a typical (editable) formula for holding the result of summing cells A1 and B1 (Excel 2000 pages 2 and 3). Page 3 shows cell C1 activated into a formula entry area (edit mode). While in edit mode, a user selects cell B3 in response to a user mouse click (user input). It is noted that selection of cell B3 initially adds "B3" to the formula.

Art Unit: 2176

Subsequent to a user's determination that cell B3 should not be entered into the first cell's formula (i.e. does not conform to a predetermined syntax), the "X" box is depressed, which cancels the action, reverting cell C1's formula back to the current state (Excel 2000 pages 5 and 6). If said user determines that said reference does conform to a predetermined syntax, then the reference is entered into the first cell's formula.

Excel 2000 discloses a validation method whereby various restrictions can be applied to cells (i.e. referring to other cells, formulas, etc.), once set, said restrictions can be automatically applied to all relevant cells in a workbook session accordingly (see Excel 2000 pages 16-19; compare with claim 12 "*determining, automatically by a computer whether a reference to second cell conforms...*").

In regard to dependent claim 13, Excel 2000 discloses additional functions which can be added to a formula, including "DATE", which is a form of search query, since it searches and returns a date-time code (Excel 2000 page 14).

In regard to independent claim 14, claim 14 reflects the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 1, and in further view of the following, is rejected along the same rationale.

During interaction with Excel 200, a user can determine syntax conformity accordingly. Alternatively, Excel 2000 provides various auditing tools to (automatically) visually trace errors (i.e. conformity errors, etc.) as well as automatically circle invalid data etc.

In addition, Excel 2000 discloses a validation method whereby various restrictions can be applied to cells (i.e. referring to other cells, formulas, etc.), once set, said restrictions can be automatically applied to all relevant cells in a workbook session accordingly (see Excel 2000 pages 16-19; compare with claim 14 "*wherein the determiner is embodied in a computing device*").

Art Unit: 2176

In regard to dependent claims 15-20, claims 15-20 reflect the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claims 2-7 respectively, and are rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to independent claim 21, claim 21 reflects the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 8, and in further view of the following, is rejected along the same rationale.

During interaction with Excel 200, a user can determine syntax conformity accordingly. Alternatively, Excel 2000 provides various auditing tools to (automatically) visually trace errors (i.e. conformity errors, etc.) as well as automatically circle invalid data etc.

In addition, Excel 2000 discloses a validation method whereby various restrictions can be applied to cells (i.e. referring to other cells, formulas, etc.), once set, said restrictions can be automatically applied to all relevant cells in a workbook session accordingly (see Excel 2000 pages 16-19; compare with claim 21 “*wherein the determiner is embodied in a computing device*”).

In regard to dependent claims 22-24, claims 22-24 reflect the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claims 9-11 respectively, and are rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to independent claim 25, claim 25 reflects the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 12, and in further view of the following, is rejected along the same rationale.

During interaction with Excel 200, a user can determine syntax conformity accordingly. Alternatively, Excel 2000 provides various auditing tools to (automatically) visually trace errors (i.e. conformity errors, etc.) as well as automatically circle invalid data etc.

Art Unit: 2176

In addition, Excel 2000 discloses a validation method whereby various restrictions can be applied to cells (i.e. referring to other cells, formulas, etc.), once set, said restrictions can be automatically applied to all relevant cells in a workbook session accordingly (see Excel 2000 pages 16-19; compare with claim 25 “*wherein the determiner is embodied in a computing device*”).

In regard to dependent claims 26, claim 26 reflects the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 13, and is rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to independent claim 27, claim 27 reflects the computer program product comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 14, and is rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to dependent claims 28-33, claims 28-33 reflect the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claims 15-20 respectively, and are rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to independent claim 34, claim 34 reflects the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 8, and is rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to dependent claims 35-37, claims 35-37 reflect the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claims 9-11 respectively, and are rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to independent claim 38, claim 38 reflects the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 12, and is rejected along the same rationale.

In regard to dependent claims 39, claim 39 reflects the system comprising computer executable instructions for implementing the methods as claimed in claim 13, and is rejected along the same rationale.

Response to Arguments

10. Applicant's arguments filed 11/21/2005 have been fully and carefully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues that Excel 2000 does not teach that the determiner is embodied on a computer, and carried out automatically. It is respectfully noted that Excel 2000 can restrict cells. After initial setup, the computer automatically compares and checks for restrictions accordingly.

Regarding claims 27, 34, and 38, it is respectfully noted that said claims do not preclude the use of any human intervention and/or direction.


Conclusion

11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to William L. Bashore whose telephone number is (571) 272-4088. The examiner can normally be reached on 11:30am - 8:00pm EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Joseph Feild can be reached on (571) 272-4090. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Art Unit: 2176

12. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


WILLIAM BASHORE
PRIMARY EXAMINER

February 4, 2006